



Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

March 10, 2015

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El Monte Community Leaders Inspire Young Women at Annual Conference

Forty high-profile elected officials, educators, and business leaders—many who grew up in El Monte—serve as local role models to 150 students

El Monte, Calif.-- The City of El Monte hosted its third annual **Inspire: A Young Women's Leadership Day** on Saturday, March 7 in the Grace T. Black Auditorium. The conference was developed to inspire young women to dream big and follow their goals, using local successful community leaders to serve as role models.

"This conference continues to have a positive impact on our community, reaching our young women at an impressionable stage in their lives," El Monte City Councilwoman Victoria Martinez said. "This event encourages the development of confidence and character-building in our students and provides resources for future success."

The conference was open to 150 seventh- through 12th-grade girls who attend El Monte Union High School, El Monte City and Mountain View school districts. Breakout session topics included seminars on self-defense, financial fitness and planning for future success. A mentoring lunch enabled young women to introduce themselves to 40 professional career women and ask questions regarding how to reach their professional objectives.

Los Angeles County Supervisor Hilda Solis was a surprise speaker at the conference. Solis spoke about how she drew on her experience growing up as the daughter of immigrant parents to take on local leadership positions, eventually enabling her to become the first Hispanic woman to serve in the U.S. Cabinet.

San Bernardino County Sheriff's detective Lolita Harper served as the keynote speaker. Harper shared information about her career path and how she was able to achieve success and overcome barriers that stood in her way.

Another highlight of the conference was a presentation by U.S. Marine Corp 1st Lt. Maria S. Chavez to the students. After sharing her career path, she provided a U.S. Marine Corp leadership coin to each

student to serve as a reminder of what the young women could accomplish if they worked hard and followed their dreams.

Students were introduced to the gramMARCH challenge, a national initiative established by Rosemead Middle School English teacher Heather Shotke. Shotke developed the program after she noticed students were submitting academic work using informal text language. The program requests that for the entire month of March, students pledge to write everything out in full sentences and use complete words.

The initial concept of a leadership day for young women was developed by Councilwoman Martinez in 2013. After attending another local leadership training seminar, she realized that the El Monte community was under-represented in the audience. With the support of her Council colleagues and local community partners, Martinez took action to introduce this vital information and resources directly to the young women of El Monte.

To encourage giving back to the community, conference attendees were asked to give two canned-good items. The canned goods were donated to the Emergency Resources Association, a local nonprofit organization who provides basic needs to families in crisis.

PHOTO CAPTION 1: U.S. Marine Corp 1st Lt. Maria S. Chavez hands a leadership coin to an a student attending the Inspire conference on Saturday, March 7. The coins serve as a physical reminder of what the students could accomplish if they worked hard to follow their dreams.

PHOTO CAPTION 2: Sharon Durall, Mountain View School District teacher of the year, greets a local student at the Inspire: A Young Women's Leadership Day conference on Saturday, March 7. More than 40 local female professionals served as role models during the day-long conference.

PHOTO CAPTION 3: The Inspire conference, held on Saturday, March 7, was developed to encourage the 150 attendees, all seventh- through 12th-grade girls attending local schools, to dream big and follow their goals.

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The City of El Monte, located in Southern California, is committed to improving the quality of life for its citizens and strives to provide its community personalized service, uncompromising commitment, and individualized accountability. For information on the City of El Monte, please call 626-580-2001 or visit www.elmonteca.gov.